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ABSTRACT

Fitchburg State College's Assessment Week and Annual Development Day are described in this report. Developed in 1976 at this Massachusetts liberal arts college, Assessment Week involves a gathering of the community to discuss pressing issues and future directions. It occurs every 10 years and consists of a 4-day, in-house conference having scheduled sessions, moderators, recorders, hosted receptions, and meals. Classes are cancelled as faculty, administrators, and selected students and non-academic personnel assess the state of the college and plan for its future. From the second Assessment Week in 1986 came an annual Development Day to review, evaluate, and revise the outcomes of 1986 Assessment Week suggestions, recommendations, goals, and programs. Topics of discussion at the 1986 Assessment Week included: relative quality of programs; liberal arts versus career education; quality of life on campus; interdisciplinary courses; faculty esprit; and handicapped students. Development Day is based on Assessment Week with the scope defined by the 1-day duration. In 1987 and 1988, themes were chosen by task forces and included critical thinking, non-profit ventures, and recruiting, and the college community met to determine the college's weaknesses and strengths and decide on the needs and concerns of the coming year. Assessment Week 1986 made 88 suggestions and recommendations, of which 65 were in place 10 years later. Development Day 1988 created nine reports, all of which are being examined by the community and acted upon by faculty and staff. An appendix provides the agenda for Assessment Week 1986. (Author/SM)

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Campus-Wide Assessment Week and Annual Development Day at Fitchburg State College

Fitchburg State College

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AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project

The AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory is a two-year project seeking to establish and test a model system for collecting and disseminating information on model programs at AASCU-member institutions--375 of the public four-year colleges and universities in the United States.

The four objectives of the project are:

- To increase the information on model programs available to all institutions through the ERIC system
- To encourage the use of the ERIC system by AASCU institutions
- To improve AASCU's ability to know about, and share information on, activities at member institutions, and
- To test a model for collaboration with ERIC that other national organizations might adopt.

The AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project is funded with a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education to the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, in collaboration with the ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education at The George Washington University.

Campus-Wide Assessment Week and
Annual Development Day

Abstract

In 1976, during his first year in office, President Vincent J. Mara instituted the first Assessment Week at Fitchburg State College. Assessment Week is somewhat like a collegiate town meeting--a gathering of the Community to discuss pressing issues and future directions--except that it only occurs every ten years. The idea of President Mara and approved through the governance structure, Assessment Week is a four-day, in-house, professional conference, complete with scheduled sessions, moderators, recorders, hosted receptions, and meals. Classes are cancelled for all four days, as faculty, administrators, and selected students and non-academic personnel come together to assess the state of the College and to plan for its future.

From the second Assessment Week in 1986 evolved an annual Development Day, a day of review, evaluation, and revision of the outcomes of 1986 Assessment Week's suggestions, recommendations, goals and programs. The Development Day is based upon the Assessment Week model with the scope being defined by the one day duration. In 1987, then again in 1988, themes were selected by task forces and the college community met to determine the college's weaknesses, discuss its strengths, and decide on the needs and concerns of the coming year.

Fitchburg State's objective is to be an uncommon public college, and the Assessment Week and Development Day programs have increased the sense of uniqueness and community among the administration, faculty, staff, and students.

Assessment Week and Development Day

In 1976, President Vincent J. Mara instituted the first Assessment Week, a collegiate town meeting to occur every ten years, wherein the college community would gather to discuss pressing issues and future directions.

From the 1986 program evolved the first annual Development Day, a day-long program that was modeled on Assessment Week. The college is now planning its third annual Development Day program.

The purpose of this paper is to give background on Fitchburg State College, to explain Assessment Week, and to provide examples of the Development Day activities and outcomes.

Background

Fitchburg State College is an uncommon public college: primarily an undergraduate institution that utilizes an extensive liberal arts framework and core for career-oriented and professional programs. In addition, it offers graduate and continuing education programs consistent with the undergraduate curriculum. As a public institution, it is committed to offering a sound and thorough education to students of all ages and backgrounds, with particular concern for those of low and moderate economic means.

Since its inception, Fitchburg State has been the educational and cultural center of the North Central Massachusetts region, serving as a resource of skills and expertise, while having a significant impact on the economic and social vitality of the region.

The college offers 60 fields of study within 20 academic majors. There are 229 full-time faculty. The number of administrators at the college is 65 and the total number of employees is 514.

The students served by Fitchburg State are homogeneous in their aspirations and backgrounds. Over 95 percent are Massachusetts residents and nearly two-thirds are drawn from the northeast quadrant of the state. About one-third commute and the balance live either in residence halls or in private housing adjacent to the campus. Generally, they are first generation college students, of average academic preparation for college, and from low to middle family-income backgrounds. They apply to the college with a specific interest in one of its career majors and anticipate returning to their hometown after graduation. Their interest in higher education is more practical than theoretical as is their preparation for college. The non-traditional student population is not large, but is growing. Minorities comprise four percent, which is high in reference to their numbers in the communities from which the college draws its students and to their participation rates in higher education.

As at many colleges, our students differ in age, sex, cultural, ethnic and religious background, socio-economic status, family and personal educational backgrounds and aspirations, career goals, interests, motivation, expectations, and abilities. As part of Fitchburg State's intellectual and academic environment, the

administration and faculty are committed to participation, responsibility, academic freedom and due process for themselves and the students. This commitment creates the climate that is responsive to the Assessment Week and Development Day programs.

Description of the Project

Assessment Week

Assessment Week at Fitchburg State College is a gathering of the Community to discuss pressing issues and future directions--and it only occurs every ten years.

In 1976, during his first year in office, President Vincent J. Mara instituted the first Assessment Week. In 1986, Assessment Week was again on the campus calendar, and representatives from all segments of the College community participated in April in what amounted to a four-day, in-house, professional conference, complete with scheduled sessions, moderators, recorders, hosted receptions, and meals.

Assessment Week, 1976, produced a long list of suggestions and recommendations encompassing all areas of campus life. Ten years later, approximately three-quarters of the eighty plus recommendations had been either implemented or incorporated into the College's Long-Range Plan.

The planning for Assessment Week, 1986, began in the spring of 1985 when the All-College Committee approved the concept and set the dates. During the fall semester of 1985, a volunteer task force of 20-25 people met regularly to plan and organize the program. An

extensive polling of the College community was done, first to determine the major topics for discussion, and later to elicit specific comments and questions concerning those topics. Moderators and recorders for the sessions were selected from among campus volunteers, and these persons examined the comments received from the Community and set the agendas for their individual sessions.

Classes were cancelled for Assessment Week, a testimony to the seriousness of the event in the life of the College. Not all students could be formally included in the program, but at least five students from each of the academic departments, as well as from the Undeclared category, were invited to be official participants--almost one hundred students in all. In addition, non-academic staff were included in those sessions which had particular relevance for them.

Four big topics were scheduled for 2-hour sessions; other topics for 1 1/4 hours: Relative Quality of Programs, Liberal Arts Versus Career Education, Quality of Life on Campus, General Education and Content Requirements, Interdisciplinary Courses, Faculty and Staff Role in Shaping Behavior, Your Role in Retention, Faculty Esprit, Response to Change, Mutual Accountability, Remediation, Handicapped Students at FSC, Teacher Education Priorities, and Institutional Involvement in Recruitment. Before, in-between, and after the sessions, there were snacks, meals, and time for social interaction. On the final afternoon of Assessment Week, either the moderator or the recorder of each session reported to the whole community. Each report summarized the general consensus of that particular session

and outlined recommendations and action plans. Thorough written reports were compiled in the two weeks after Assessment Week and distributed to the entire College. (See Appendix A for schedule.)

Follow-up began immediately after Assessment Week. Some recommendations were delegated by the President and attended to immediately. Others of a more complex nature became items in the Long-Range Plan or topics for extended study and debate by College committees.

Assessment Week was a daring project which forced the Community to cease business-as-usual for four days and look hard at itself. As a result of the exciting opportunity for intra-campus communication, appraisal, brainstorming, and consensus-building and providing direction to the College, the College community decided to duplicate vital components of the Assessment Week program on a yearly basis as Development Day.

Development Day

As a result of the success of Assessment Week, 1976 and 1986, President Mara made money available for such activities as travel, professional development, workshops and an annual Development Day. Faculty and staff were sent to colleges and universities across the country to learn about their model programs. As was done during Assessment Week, all day classes were cancelled, and faculty, administration, secretaries, and selected students participated in the Development Day program.

Discussion topics centered around the campus visits to model institutions, critical thinking, creative solutions for providing improved services and facilities for faculty, staff and students, non-profit ventures, advantages and disadvantages of being a selective college, admission standards, recruiting, campus friendliness, the faculty and staff role in "student centeredness," and improving freshman year experiences.

As a result of the Community discussions of the day, nine reports were submitted on the following topics:

1. Lessons and benefits for Fitchburg State College from Appalachia State University.
2. Fitchburg State as a selective college.
3. Should we promote Fitchburg State College as a selective college? Should we raise admission standards? Should we recruit quality even at the expense of quantity?
4. Should FSC be more student centered?
5. Is FSC perceived by students as a friendly place? Should FSC be more student centered? What role can faculty and staff play?
6. Open discussion of topics of interest within the group.
7. The college should do all that is possible to maintain "psychological integrity" and to promote a sense of belonging.
8. Freshmen retention.
9. Providing improved services and facilities for faculty, staff and students. Should the college engage in non-profit ventures to this end?

A 24 page report evolved from the 1988 Development Day program, that has since been addressed, as was the original 1976 Assessment Day, by the President's allocating resources to some programs, reports being forwarded to governing committees for action, administrative evaluations being done to determine if each recommendation from the reports had been considered by the appropriate unit and if the appropriate action had been taken, and finally, others of a more complex nature became items in the Long-Range Plan or topics for extended study and debate..

Assessment and Evaluation

Assessment Week, 1976, resulted in eighty-plus suggestions and recommendations, of which approximately sixty-five were in place ten years later, surely a testament to its effectiveness. Development Day 1988 created nine reports filled with 24 pages of recommendations, all of which are being examined by the full community and acted upon by the faculty and staff governing bodies. In the intervening years, from the 1986 Assessment Week and 1987 Development Day programs, similar evaluations, revisions, and plans have emerged. The cooperation of the College governance structure (in voting to cancel classes and putting this on the calendar) and of the volunteer planners, moderators, recorders, and student participants has provided evidence of the community's sense of Assessment Week's and Development Day's importance and of its belief that the activities of those projects can affect real changes in the life of the college.

Based upon the results of the programs at Fitchburg State, other colleges and universities could adapt the components to their institutions.

In his remarks opening the Fall, 1987 semester, President Mara reiterated his commitment "to become the best, a truly extraordinary, a truly uncommon public college." Assessment Week and Development Day have enhanced Fitchburg State's ability to make that happen.

APPENDIX A

Fitchburg State College
ASSESSMENT WEEK '86

Tuesday, April 22

Coffee and Name Tag Operation	Conlon Foyer	8:00- 8:30
Remarks by President	Conlon 150	8:30- 9:15
RELATIVE QUALITY OF PROGRAMS	T102, 111, 113; CS201, 204	9:30-10:30
Coffee/Tea Break	Thompson or Condike Foyer	10:30-10:45
Seminar Continues	See Above	10:45-11:45
Lunch	Hammond Pub Area	12:00- 1:15
LIBERAL ARTS VS CAREER EDUCATION	T102, 111, 113; CS201, 204	1:30- 2:30
Punch Break	Thompson or Condike Foyer	2:30- 2:45
Seminar Continues	See Above locations	2:45- 3:45
Wine and Cheese Reception	Hammond Pub Area	4:00- 5:00

Wednesday, April 23

Coffee	Thompson or Condike Foyer	8:30- 9:00
QUALITY OF LIFE ON CAMPUS	T102, 111, 113; CS201, 204	9:00 10:00
Coffee/Tea Break	Thompson or Condike Foyer	10:00-10:30
Seminar Continues	See Above	10:30-11:45
Lunch	Hammond Pub Area	12:00- 1:15
GENERAL ED./CONTENT: REQUIREMENTS	T102, 111, 113; CS201, 204	1:30- 2:30
Punch Break	Condike or Thompson Foyer	2:30- 2:45
Seminar Continues	See Above	2:45- 3:45
Punch and Goodies	Hammond Pub Area	4:00- 5:00

Thursday, April 24

Coffee	Thompson or Condike Foyer	8:30- 9:00
Concurrent Sessions (Join One):		
INTERDISCIPLINARY COURSES	T102	9:00- 10:15
FACULTY/STAFF ROLE IN SHAPING BEHAVIOR	T111	
YOUR ROLE IN RETENTION	T113	
FACULTY ESPRIT	CS201	
RESPONSE TO CHANGE	CS204	
FAC/STU/ADM: MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY	CS205	
Coffee/Tea Break	Condike or Thompson Foyer	10:15-10:30
Sessions Repeated: (Join Another)	See Above Locations	10:30-11:45
Lunch	Hammond Pub Area	12:00- 1:15
Sessions--still another	See above locations	1:30- 2:45
Punch Break	Condike or Thompson Foyer	2:45- 3:00
Special Restricted Meetings:		
FSCFA (Faculty Union)	T102	3:00- 4:15
MTA/APA (Administrator Union)	T111	
"Ad Hoc" Groups	T113; CS201, 204, 205	
Cocktails	Hammond Pub Area	4:30- 6:00
Dinner	Hammond Pub Area	6:00-

Friday, April 25

Coffee	Thompson or Condike Foyer	8:30- 9:00
Special Note:		
Students to Hold Separate Session	CM150	9:00-11:45 —
Coffee/Tea Break	Condike or Thompson Foyer	10:15-10:30
Concurrent Sessions (Join One):		
REMEDIATION	T102	9:00-10:15
HANDICAPPED STUDENTS AT FSC	T111	
TEACHER EDUCATION PRIORITIES	T113	
INSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENT IN RECRUITMENT	T119	
Reports of Standing Committees:		
ACC Curriculum	CS201	
ACC Grad. Ed. Council	CS204	
ACC Long Range Planning	CS205	
ACC Student Affairs	CS304	
ACC Academic Policies	CS312	
Coffee/Tea Break	Condike or Thompson Foyer	10:15-10:30
Sessions (Join Another)	See Above Locations	10:30-11:45 —
Lunch	Hammond Pub Area	12:00- 1:15
General Assembly for Summary And Consensus	CM150	1:30- 4:00
Happy Weekend Cocktails	Hammond Area Pub	4:00

Note 1: Each of the four topics on Tuesday and Wednesday has five discussion groups. Please attend the one which matches the color card that you picked up on the name tag table. By doing this, you will help us keep the numbers in each group at a reasonable level.

Note 2: All coffee and punch breaks between sessions will be available in the first floor foyer of Thompson and the Foyer next to the Science Lecture Hall in Condike.

Note 3: Please keep to the time schedule. We would like the "feeding" logistics to work as smoothly as possible for maximum ease.

Note 4: Make out two name tags--in case one wears out.

Note 5: We need at least one volunteer from each of the Standing Committees to be present at the Standing Committee Reports on Friday morning.

RELAX AND ENJOY EACH OTHER'S COMPANY IN A GOOD SENSE OF COMMUNITY!

Fitchburg State College
ASSESSMENT WEEK '86

Room	Moderators	Recorders
Relative Quality of Programs--April 22		
T102	Patrick Delaney	Dorothy Boisvert
T111	John Dufault	Charles Wilson
T113	Richard Bisk	Joseph Farragher
CS201	Robert Kelleher	Martha Savery
CS204	Robert Champlin	Christine Cosgrove
Liberal Arts vs Career Education--April 22		
T102	Larry Quigley	Franz Nowotny
T111	Neal Anderson	Irene Harris
T113	Robert Tapply	David Carey
CS201	George Murphy	Colin Bourn
CS204	David Maloney	Richard DeCesare
Quality of Life on Campus--April 23		
T102	Jeff Green	Elizabeth Kruczek
T111	Lon Vickers	Edmund Thomas
T113	Mary Ann Hanley	Michael Shanley
CS201	Anita Hotchkiss	Terrance Carroll
CS204	Don Schmidt	Raoul Rebillard
General Education/Content: Requirements--April 23		
T102	Walter Jeffko	Nancy Yee
T111	Elaine Gardiner	Daniel Flynn
T113	Peter Hogan	Michael Rivard
CS201	Robert Strong	Joseph Wagner
CS204	Stanley Dick	Ernest Fandreyer
Interdisciplinary Courses--April 24		
T102	Shirley Haslip	Elizabeth Rodenhiser
Faculty-Staff Role in Shaping Behavior--April 24		
T111	Jeanne Driscoll	Christine Nelsen
Your Role In Retention--April 24		
T113	Norman Fredette	Augustine Aryee

Faculty Esprit --April 24

CS201	Therese Bushner	John Jazeika

Response to Change--April 24

CS204	Ann Bogojavlensky	Larry Quigley

Faculty-Students-Admin. Mutual Accountability--April 24

CS205	Cynthia Tower	Patrick Delaney

Remediation--April 25

T102	George Merriam	Howard Kingsley

Handicapped Students at FSC--April 25

T111	Grainger Browning	Steven Lanciani

Teacher-Education Priorities--April 25

T113	Lawrence Gomes	George James

Institutional Involvement in Recruitment--April 25

T119	Terry Carsten	Donald Carlson